

CULCON Media Cooperation Working Group Joint Report

The CULCON binational media working group met for the first time in Tokyo in May, 1994 to agree on concrete measures to improve the quality and quantity of coverage of Japan and the United States on the other country. The meeting resulted in agreements in the following areas:

1. Communication Styles

The group agreed to oversee production of a video and booklet that will give examples of specific differences in communication and interview styles with the aim of producing more effective interviews on both sides.

2. Seminars, Exchanges for Media Professionals

The Working Group encouraged the expansion of ongoing efforts in this area for media professionals to identify and understand cultural differences and differences in production style.

3. Media Directory

The 1994 edition of **ON THE RECORD**, published by the US CULCON secretariat, has been well-received by members of the American media and Japan specialists. The directory is designed to help the US media provide more extensive, accurate and timely coverage of the issues in the bilateral relationship. The Working Group agreed on the importance of publishing an expanded directory for the US media that would include experts based in Japan who agree to be interviewed in their area of specialization. The Japan side agreed to assist in the collection of data of Japan experts.

4. Co-Production and Cooperative Activities

The Working Group recognized the necessity of cooperation and co-production, in terms of human, financial and technical cooperation and sharing material resources. The group agreed that cooperative activities "enhance the ability of individuals in the media to work with each other to streamline production and develop higher quality products."

5. Media Access

The Working Group agreed that "fair and equal access to information is vital for American and Japanese journalists reporting on or in the other country" and would encourage all activities toward that end.

Media Cooperation Working Group
US Panel Report
Presented by Mr. Burnill Clark

Since the binational working group meeting, the US side has put a great deal of effort into various projects that fall under the rubric of media cooperation. Some of these have been initiated by the US side, and others are based on binational recommendations. I will discuss each of these areas briefly:

I. Co-production and Cooperative Arrangements

At its meeting of October 28, 1994, the US panel media working group recommended that both CULCON panels be asked to submit a report on cooperative and co-production from commercial and public television at CULCON XVII. After an initial inquiry, the US panel discovered that data and research on this topic is not readily available. Therefore, the working group has begun thinking about how to survey this area in a systematic way. Such a survey would make an obvious and appropriate follow-up to the next activity I will discuss.

II. Seminars for Public and Commercial Broadcasters

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) together with NHK held its fourth, and probably last, seminar for producers in public television at the East-West Center in Honolulu in December, 1994. The US CULCON working group, together with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, have commissioned Michael Berger, a media consultant, to edit the findings of the four CPB seminars into a single document. The resulting document, which will read as a road map of sorts to identifying and overcoming potential pitfalls in coproduction, might be applicable to other media as a training document or as a monograph of general interest. The publication will be distributed widely. It will also form the basis of a seminar for American commercial broadcasters involved in or about to be involved in a co-production or cooperative arrangement with the Japanese. The one-day seminar will be sponsored by the US panel working group and will be held in New York at Columbia University School of Journalism in the spring of 1995.

III. Packaging Program Proposals

In conjunction with the US Public Television International Consortium, the US CULCON media working group distributed a call for proposals for Japan-related programming that would be packaged and presented to potential underwriters. However, the working group identified a lack of available seed funds to develop the scripts properly as a problem that would need to be addressed before it would see good proposals for films on Japan submitted to it. The working group discussed this problem at length with the Japan-US Friendship Commission. In response to

CULCON's need, the Commission has formalized a program whereby funds will be available for research and development for scripts on promising Japan-related topics. The Commission is in the process of announcing the change in their program guidelines through appropriate channels.

IV. Media Directory

The US secretariat published the second edition of its media directory of Japan specialists, **On The Record**. The directory is currently being updated for the 1995 edition, which will be expanded to include specialists based in Japan. As agreed at the May, 1994 binational working group meeting, the Japan CULCON secretariat is assisting in locating and gathering information on appropriate specialists in Japan. The 1995 edition will probably be published during the middle or end of 1995.

V. Media Access

The working group felt that the dialogue opened at the May, 1994 binational media meeting in Tokyo on media was an extremely worthwhile one. The group feels that, with the goal of better quality coverage by each side of the other, it is vital to pursue issues of equal access to information for the media..

I would like to take a few minutes to outline the current status of media access to foreign journalists in Japan.

In June, 1993 the press club system, which I believe we are all familiar with, was opened in principle by the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association to foreign membership. This is an action that has been applauded by the binational CULCON media working group.

Since the declaration, several clubs have allowed foreign news organizations to gain full membership and others, such as the Prime Minister's residence, have granted observers status to foreign journalist. There are still many, however, that remain closed. In addition, some clubs require full-time attendance by member reporters. This means that only the news organizations with a large staff, such as the wire services, can comply and therefore qualify for membership

Another difficult issue that foreign news organizations face in joining the press clubs in Japan is the perceived necessity to choose between staying independent in order to be able to report the whole story, or complying with the press club "embargo" or "kokuban" rules. The wire services who have joined various ministry clubs have said that in practice they have not had to change their reporting in any way. However, this remains a potential source of ideological conflict.

There are concerns voiced by the foreign journalists that even the possibility of full membership does not necessarily translate into equal access. In this regard, foreign press have cited signs of subtle discrimination. For instance, they may receive press releases after all the Japanese members do, which gives them a competitive handicap. It should be pointed out that some of the same disadvantages exist in the United States, where large news organizations tend to have better access than smaller or foreign organizations by virtue of their perceived "clout."

In summary, although the situation has clearly been improving, there remain obstacles to equal access that the press club system has yet to address. There is also a need to address issues of access to information by the smaller organizations -- both foreign and domestic -- that fall outside the press club system.

Of the various activities that the US media working group has discussed, it considers the issues of media access to be ultimately the most important in impact to both sides. It believes that CULCON should be asked to give continued attention to this issue and that the media working group should be asked to carry out this function.